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ON THE TEXT OF PSALMS XIV. AND LIII.

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A study of parallel texts might, I believe, throw much light on questions of Old Testament criticism.

I offer the following suggestions on the origin of the variations in Pss. XIV. and LIII. in the hope that other students may be induced to follow out or to controvert the views here suggested.

I omit the headings and superscriptions as not belonging to the original texts. All other variations as they exist in the Massoretic texts will be seen in the following table :

Ps. XIV.	Ps. LIII.
אמר נבל בלבו.. אין אלהים	
השחיתו התעיבו עליה.. אין עשה-טוב	עֹל
יהוה משמים השקיף.. על בני אדם	אלהים
לראות היש משכיל.. דרש את אלהים	
הכל סר	כלו סג
יחרו נאלחו	
אין עשה טוב	
אין גם אחד	
הלא ידעו	
כל פעלי און	(omit כל)
אכלי עמי	
אכלו לחם	
יהוה לא קראו	
שם פחדו פחד	
כי אלהים בדר צדיק	לא היה פחד כי אלהים פזר
עצמת חנך [חנף. LXX.] הבישתה עצת עני תבישו	
כי יהוה מחסהו	כי אלהים מאַסם

The Psalm begins with an elegiac movement of four pentameters of accented syllables, after which it breaks into a rapid movement expressive of indignation. This movement consists chiefly of triplets and is continued to the end of the Psalm.

The words הלא ידעו were, I believe, originally אַל לֹא יִדְעוּ, a copyist having been misled by similarity of sound (cf. Ps. LXXXV., 7, where the LXX. evidently read אַל לֹא for אֵל לֹא). If this emendation be admitted the rhythm is

improved and we observe a remarkable alternation in the Divine Names, אֱלֹהִים and יְהוָה occurring alternately *three times* before and three times after the name אֵל. This adaptation of Divine Names may, of course, be the work of a reviser, but it should be compared with the name יְהוָה, אֱלֹהִים, אֵל in Ps. L., 1.

A point, however, of much greater interest is the text which underlies the strange variation in the last three lines of our Psalm.

The common theory of a later Psalmist adapting the words of an existing Psalm to some special needs of his own time cannot possibly account for the variations in Ps. LIII.

It requires, indeed, a large credulity to believe that an inspired writer should have altered בָּרַר into פָּוַר, omitted the word corresponding to צָרִיק, changed עֲצָת *counsel* into עֲצָמוֹת *bones*! עֵנִי into חֲנֹךְ, besides other changes of similar sounding letters and all to destroy all possibility of rhythm and, in the end, to get such a sense as this:— “For God hath scattered the bones of him that encampeth against thee; thou hast put them to shame, because God hath rejected them.” (RV.) !

A writer would scarcely speak of an enemy whose bones had been scattered as afterwards “put to shame” and “rejected.”

But, apart from this, we have a better text suggested by the LXX., which evidently read חֲנֹף *hypocrite* instead of חֲנֹךְ *him that encampeth against thee*.

But though the text in Ps. LIII. is in confusion, we cannot, therefore, assume that the parallel passage in Ps. XIV. represents the original text.

בִּי in one clause doubtless corresponds to בִּי in the other; so that we are not justified in translating

“for God is in the generation of the righteous”.....

“because the Lord is his refuge.”

Again, who are they that are addressed in the disconnected words “The counsel of the poor *ye* put to shame”?

There is then a strong *a priori* probability in favor of a common text from which these two texts diverged.

Towards the construction of such a text I offer the following suggestions:

A verb is needed where בָּרַר now stands. The parallel text (LIII.) suggests פָּוַר. Now the Chaldee בָּרַר (Dan. iv., 11) signifies to *scatter* and is only another form of פָּוַר.

If any one should object that בָּרַר is *Chaldee*, I suggest בִּיַר which is another synonym of פָּוַר (see Ps. LXVIII., 31) and which might easily have been mistaken for בָּרַר and then pointed בִּיַר.

Again, instead of צָרִיק which unfortunately has no equivalent in the parallel text of Ps. LIII., I suggest עָרִיץ, making indeed the same correction which all critical scholars agree to make in the text of Isa. XLIX., 24, where עָרִיק is undoubtedly a very old mistake for עָרִיץ.

Again, on comparing the parallel texts, עֵצַת is more likely to be a correction than עֵצַמַת; consequently I retain the latter, but point it יַעֲצַמַת¹ “weighty counsels.”

Of the three readings עֵנִי (Ps. XIV.), חֲנֹךְ (Ps. LIII.) and חֲנִיָּה (LXX. on Ps. LIII.) I prefer the latter. So the whole passage, as I propose to restore it, would run,

כִּי הַבּוֹר עָרִיץ
עֵצַמַת חֲנִיָּה הִבִּישׁ
כִּי "מֵאִסָּם

i. e., “For God hath scattered the proud,
The weighty counsel of the hypocrite he hath put to shame,
For the Lord hath despised them.”

The historical allusion being probably to the frustration of the counsel of Ahithophel (2 Sam. xv.).

¹ See Isa. xli., 21, “bring hither your weighty counsels יַעֲצַמֹתֵיכֶם saith the king of Jacob.”